

# Dragon Newsletter



*March 25, 2006 Edition*

## Thanks for the Girl Scout Cookies, Mrs. Gaide!

Dear Dragon Families and Friends,

Spring has arrived in Iraq. The temperatures are warmer, but still pleasant. The grass and trees are starting to grow, and the birds are competing with us for the airspace...we win this battle every time. We are enjoying it while we can because it will really start to get hot here in the upcoming month or two.

Opening day came to "Dragon Field" here at Camp Taji. We have a softball field outside of our headquarters. It is exactly like the fields at home. Well, the one difference is that it's all rock and sand—no grass—but it is the only one here on Camp Taji and we may be able to rent it out as an FRG fundraiser (just kidding guys, don't get any ideas). The E Company Roughriders claimed their first victory over the Charlie Company Sidewinders. In other sports news, the battalion received a shipment of weights and exercise machines for our gym. The equipment was ordered by the previous unit over a year ago and just now made it here, so we owe the Tigersharks another big thank you.

The Soldiers of E Company have done an outstanding job keeping aircraft fueled and doing it safely. Most of the distribution platoon has been working at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) since December. They hit a major milestone of pumping over 1, 000,000 gallons of fuel between Camp Taji and BIAP. The distribution platoon will be rejoining the battalion at Camp Taji by the end of the month.

The steady stream of personnel departing for and returning from Environmental Morale Leave (EML) continues. It is our goal that all eligible Soldiers get to go on leave. We should have no problem achieving that based on current allocations.

The battalion has flown over 5200 hours since our deployment.

This is roughly the amount of hours we flew the entire previous year. That is the equivalent to 216 days straight if you flew one helicopter without stopping, or if you flew all twenty four helicopters for nine days straight. That is particularly impressive when you take into consideration that it takes several hours of maintenance for every one hour of flight time.



**SGT Brandin Ross from C Company performs maintenance on an aircraft part.**

The internet café has been down and we are currently working with the contractor who owns the equipment to get the service back up and running. I apologize if it has been more difficult lately to communicate. Until that gets fixed however, there are several other internet facilities here on Camp Taji that we encourage Soldiers to use until ours is back up and running.

In the mean time, the clock keeps ticking. Checking my tracker today, the unit is over 35% through our deployment. We appreciate all of the hard work and support from our families and friends back home. This month, special thanks goes out to Mrs. Kim Gaide, the

mother of one of our Soldiers, PFC David (Davy) Gaide. She organized a coalition that collected and shipped care packages to our Soldiers. In all we received over 282 boxes of Girl Scout cookies and a sundry of other items. The donations came from Lee Memorial Health System, the American Legion Auxiliary Post #93, and the Fort Myers HS ROTC program, all from Fort Myers, Florida.

As always, thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,  
Lieutenant Colonel Mike Rapavi  
Dragon 06

# Alpha Company "Vipers"



To the friends and families of the Vipers, Happy St. Patrick's Day! Another month down, and it's March already. Fortunately the pace over here remains fast and hectic, which makes time for everyone go by much faster. Well, for the most part the rain has stopped, and with that all of the mud that everyone had been carrying with them everywhere they went. The rain has now been replaced by wind, which may not seem like a big deal, but wind in Iraq swirls up dust and that dust just hangs around for days. Most guys now know the constant feeling of dusty grit in their teeth, and it looking like the surface of Mars outside. Mother Nature has shown everyone mercy so far with the temperature, but everyone is bracing for the inevitable 100+ degrees that lay ahead for us.

This past month some Vipers were able to take a well-deserved break and take leave. SPC Gonzales and CPL Bender got to

spend some quality time in the States taking a break from the fast pace of deployment. Most came back saying that they tried very hard to sleep late everyday, but could not because they were so used to life here at Camp Taji.

From all accounts everyone so far has enjoyed their time off and made the most of it (much to the detriment of their bank accounts!)

Many Vipers are finding ways to make the most of the little free time that they have here. SGT Woodburn has been leading a team of "gym rats," including SPC Zwadzich and PFC Garlick. After work each day you can guarantee to find them pumping iron in the gym. CW2 Harper can usually be found trying to get a game of poker started with whomever is around and CW2 Paul is almost sure to be in his room air-brushing his latest creation. Also thanks



**Dave Harper, promoted to CW2 by his platoon leader 1LT Dunn, and company commander, CPT Measner.**

to CW2 Fuller, many pilots have developed a fondness for cigars and company "smoke outs" have become the routine after the daily grind of flying missions is over.

This past month was a banner month for promotions. Congratulations go to CW2 Harper for finally casting off the dreaded title of WOJ. He is still the junior ranking warrant officer in the company and no one will ever let him forget it. Also, PV2 Garlick was promoted to PFC, which was a well deserved promotion, given all of the hard work he has shown since the company was deployed. In fact everyone in the company has been working and playing very hard and making the most of their time. We all miss our families and friends at home very much, but we are all very thankful for the thoughts and prayers you all are giving us. With any luck, time will continue to fly by and we will all be home before we know it!

CPT Timothy Measner  
Company Commander



**Newly promoted Private First Class Christopher Garlick.**



# Bravo Company "Raptors"



The rumors of my demise have been greatly exaggerated....or at least have temporarily been postponed. A simple shift in timelines, due to operational necessity, has postponed my change of command, giving me the honor of leading Bravo Company one last month. This will truly be my last newsletter, I promise...I think.

As I have already said my goodbyes to each of you and expressed my great admiration and thanks, instead of recapping many of the things I have already written about I would like to share a story that I heard with you before we left.

In late October, I had the opportunity to stand beside my wife and watch her in her professional capacity for once. I watched her execute a human resources conference that she had planned with military precision. One of the most well attended in the hospitality industry, the conference room was filled with high ranking executives from some of America's best known companies. At the reception on the final evening, I was standing in the middle of a crowded room, waiting for my wife to wrap up her work so that we could celebrate her successes. While I waited, I was introduced to Marilyn Carlson Nelson, chairman and chief executive officer of Carlson Companies, one of the world's largest privately held companies. An industry icon, I had just finished listening to her address the conference and can say that she is the best public speaker whom I have ever had the opportunity to hear. She had learned that I would be leaving for Iraq and had come over to thank me for my service and to express her support for what we are doing over here. During our conversation she

told me a story which may help all of you, as we enter our fourth month here.

She told me about a small salon where she goes to get her nails done. "It is not one of those fancy places," she told me, "I don't have time for all of that." The business is run by a family from Vietnam. During one of her visits, the conversation turned to the war in Iraq. The family that ran the shop expressed to her their complete support for

never sailed before, they headed for international waters, risking death and the chance of freedom over oppression and terror. Their ship was not picked up but rather came to rest on the shores of another nation in the region. Not being the only family to make such a journey, they were told by the government, that they must get back in their boat and leave the shores of that country. That night, before they were to again set sail, the father went down to the sea and set fire to the boat. The nation, having a policy which did not allow them to extradite families back to Vietnam, worked with other nations to place the members of that family, along with thousands of others. The family was split as countries around the world took filled their refugee quotas. Some members of the family ended up in England, some in Norway and others in America.

I believe the moral of the story I was told that night is this: The United States is not a nation. It is an idea which transcends borders and boundaries, transforming the lives, hopes and dreams of millions beyond

our shores. If war is truly a continuation of politics by other means, then the goodwill of our nation, (with goodwill being defined from my accounting days as value which is added but not tangibly measurable) or that transcending idea that I spoke of, now rests squarely on the shoulders of our Soldiers. So in this fourth month, as we wake up in the morning and ask ourselves "why," let us not take refuge in our own self pity but in the pride of preserving the hopes and dreams of millions.

Jeffrey M. Papaleo  
CPT, AV



**CPT Papaleo reenlists crew chief SGT Suarez.**

our efforts and highlighted the importance of America's success. The shop owner's son told her the story of their family's voyage to America. The family had been actively engaged in supporting the war in Vietnam. When US forces left, many members of the extended family grew concerned for their own future, sensing an imminent loss of the freedoms that they so greatly cherished. The father, the patriarch of the extended family, eased their concerns telling them all that the Americans would return. When we did not, he procured a small boat and gathered approximately 50 of his family members. Having

# Charlie Company "Sidewinders"



It's springtime in Iraq and the weather could not be better! Despite the fact that we've endured our first two dust storms of the year, the weather has been great for flying. Although the skies above Baghdad are consistently brown due to smog and dust, the outlying areas are a lush green. Thanks to February rains and irrigation canals fed by the Tigris and Euphrates, farmers around Baghdad have had a busy month tending their crops. In the city, some feuding Sunni and Shiite factions have also been busy – making trouble. Thanks largely to the efforts of Soldiers from the Iraqi Army and the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, as well as the Iraqi Police, things have finally begun to settle down and return to normal. Well, maybe not *normal* - but normal for Iraq!

The Sidewinders are very pleased to announce the promotion of the following Soldiers. These Sidewinders were promoted to positions of additional authority and responsibility based upon their service, past performance and potential. These two have been performing magnificently, and the promotions are well deserved.

Andre Castro - promoted to Sergeant

Marty Maust - promoted to Chief Warrant Officer Two

Also, congratulations to our newest "Pilot-in-Command," CW2 Sean Muckleroy. The PIC is the crewmember that's ultimately responsible for the employment of his aircraft. It is a position of responsibility awarded, irrespective of rank, based upon the pilot's level of proficiency, his judgment and his experience.

Here is what we know so far about leave for March:

Early March	- SGT Andre Castro
Mid-March	- SPC Clayton Anderson
Late March	- CW2 Brian Riddle

Thanks to everyone for all of your support!!

Very Respectfully,

Mark A. Greene  
"Sidewinder 06"  
Captain, US Army  
Commanding



**Newly promoted SGT Castro, with CPL Serna at the company CP.**

**SPC Hardin, out on the flightline for some late night maintenance.**





# Delta Company "Dawgs"



Greetings and thanks for your continued support. We are now into the fifth month of this deployment and it seems to be progressing rapidly. Some of you have already seen your loved ones come home for leave and then depart again. Hopefully you and your spouse are taking advantage of the time and relaxing. Because of the stress that deployments induce on families and relationships, I sincerely hope that the opportunity to take leave is easing some of the burden. We are still keeping a very busy schedule maintaining the battalion's aircraft. In addition to normal aircraft maintenance, we continue to conduct guard duty to secure the airfield, camp, dining facilities and other key areas.

The temperature here at Taji is beginning to increase. The recent afternoon temperatures have climbed into the 80s, which is a mere preview of the hot weather that will be here soon. Soldiers in D Company have the advantage of working mostly in the hangar, with some Soldiers from armament having to spend extended periods in the sun. When that does occur we will have plenty of sunscreen and water on hand to fight the elements. We also have other facilities with shade and air conditioning along the flight line that will help Soldiers beat the heat.

Congratulations to newly promoted SSG Miller. We are proud of his accomplishments and appreciate the contributions he makes to the team. I would also like to thank SGT Chica and SPC Evans for their recent re-enlistment. We encourage great Soldiers and leaders to continue their service in our Army and these gentlemen are no exception. They, like SSG Miller, are



**D Co Soldiers get ready to execute a Quick Reaction Force for an exercise on Camp Taji. [Top Row: SPC Nathan Staples, PFC Christopher Chiodo, CPL Richard V. Rodriguez, SPC Jared Akers. Middle Row: PFC Shawn Weillert, SPC Larry Triplett, SPC Kevin Tromp. Bottom Row: 1SG Ricky Belle, PFC Jacob Platt, SGT Nikalas Foreman, SPC Christopher Friend.]**

key members of our team and excellent role models for their peers.

During a recent operation, your Dawgs once again showed the brigade why they have such an excellent reputation. In addition to an already high OPTEMPO, the Dawgs surged over an eight day period to ensure that the battalion did not miss a mission due to maintenance. Quite frankly, their efforts were second to none. At this point in my command I should not be surprised, but I am always impressed by the effort and professionalism that these Soldiers exhibit.

Our Soldiers are in a routine now, or "battle rhythm", and they have adjusted well to the demands of the mission here.

Our biggest enemy at this point is becoming too familiar, or complacent. Myself and the First Sergeant work tirelessly to ensure that we remain safe by doing the basics right all the time. I intend to bring all of our Soldiers home safe to their families and it is our daily mission to ensure that happens. I thank you all for your support of this company and our Soldiers. All of the email, packages and letters make a positive difference in the morale of our Soldiers. The Dawgs are doing well and are making you proud. Take care, be safe and stay in touch.

All the best,

CPT Corey M. James  
DAWG 06

# Echo Company "Rough Riders"



## Salutations from Roughrider 6...

With one-third of the tour under our belts, the Roughriders of Echo Company have begun to see the light at the end of the tunnel...well, at least we know that there will be a tunnel.

It's that time again and the Echo Company Maintenance Section has been up to wonderful things. The major accomplishment of the past month was our mission to make four fuel trucks Fully Mission Capable for a large scale mission at the BIAP FARP. The unscheduled maintenance section accomplished this mission in a single day and had the trucks ready to roll. The congratulations are due to SSG Sandoval, SSG Garcia, SGT Bozenske, PFC Waller, PFC Gutierrez, PV2 Sierra, PV2 Mullins, and PVT Sabala. Other highlights of the month include CW2 Horton's BBQ Pit which was completed and seasoned with bacon grease provided by the always accommodating Echo Company cooks. Chief's pit was built from scratch by welders; PFC Holmgard, PFC King, and Chief himself. The plans for the first cook out on the BBQ pit are in the works. On Sunday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, the Motor pool leadership also sponsored a section pizza party to reward the hard working Soldiers.

SFC Witten, our resident perfectionist, also had a project worth noting. One of the HMMWVs left by 3<sup>rd</sup> ID was in great need of a suspension that could support the weight of its add-on armor and now it has the tightest suspension on Taji with a four and a half inch lift. You can't quite understand what a milestone this was unless you saw the hard work SFC Witten put into his project. Not to mention, having to wait on parts to come in. SGT Witten also wanted everyone to know that PV2 Sierra helped him with his project. The surprise of the month was 1LT Compton receiving two sets of coveralls and heading out to work with the service section. The Sol-

**CW2 Horton and SFC Witten stand next to HMMWVs that were modified to support additional armor add-ons.**



**CW2 Horton shows off his skills at designing and welding together a handcrafted BBQ pit.**

diers now have an alibi if things turn up broken on the trucks the LT works on. In other motor pool news, SSG Sandoval has embarked on a full out refurbishment of his containerized office space. Finally, the motor pool has a new motto: **Rough Rider Maintenance, Ride or Die!** Until next month, the Echo Company Maintenance Section will continue working hard to maintain the fleet and support the battalion's maintenance needs.

For Distribution Platoon this month, they are geared up and ready to turn over the BIAP FARP mission to 2-4 AVN at the end of March. Recently, they went over the 1 million gallons issued mark with both BIAP FARP and cold gas at Camp Taji. Later this month, BIAP FARP will hit that mark by themselves. Just for comparison, 1<sup>st</sup> CAV has the OIF record at 3 million in a one year rotation; our guys hit 1 million in 3 months. Way to go Distro!

Currently, we have 11 Soldiers on leave. SGT Arevalo, PFC Edwards, SSG Emigh, SGT Parker, PV2 Lichtenstein, PFC Martinez, SPC Statz, PFC Wallace, PFC Wildes, SGT Bozenski, and PVT Brockington are all now back in the States soaking in the good ol' American Freedom. Three newly assigned Soldiers who recently arrived and are quickly integrating into Echo Company are PV2 Hadnot (Cook), PV2 Mullins (Mechanic), and PV2 Sierra-Ortiz (Mechanic).

SGT Williams from Headquarters Platoon "set the example" by winning the Battalion's NCO of the Month Board. PFC Gaide also won the Battalion Soldier of the Month Board for the month of February. Congrats to both of our Soldiers on their recent wins.

CPT James R. Ritch, Company Commander



# HHC "Stallions"



## Stallion Family and Friends,

Hello once again from Camp Taji. Your Soldiers continue to impress me on a daily basis. Since assuming this mission, these Stallions have become an even more cohesive and hard charging unit than they were prior to deployment. The constant ingredient that allows this to happen is the many supporters and exceptional Rear-D that we have back in the States. When I ask the question, "How is everything at home," and I hear, "Fine," that lets me know how supportive you all are back home. I fully understand that the type of performance we receive from these Soldiers comes at the expense of the families. So once again, thank you for ALL that you do in your efforts to support these Stallions. We have had a very busy month since our last newsletter: the Operations and Commo sections still maintain an aggressive 24 hour shift, we have received new equipment to upgrade Average Joe's Gym, and many of our Soldiers

have had the opportunity to return to the States on Environmental Morale Leave.

We have also added new Stallions to the HHC stable. I am delighted to welcome SSG Ridley, SPC McAlister, PV2 Sowe and PV2 Tagabuel. They are all welcome additions to the operations and logistics sections respectively. In HHC, these new Soldiers are considered our newest brothers. With these brothers, we also have a new little sister in PV2 Tagabuel. PV2 Tagabuel is originally from Saipan. At 19 years of age she is currently the youngest Stallion in the unit.

This month we celebrate Women's History month to recognize their many contributions and accomplishments. We have many extraordinary women in Head-



**PFC Danny, an HHC Soldier from the S4 supply shop.**

quarters and Headquarters Company. A particular member of distinction in HHC is PV2 Tagabuel. PV2 Tagabuel and her sister, SPC Tagabuel, a mechanic in another unit, are both stationed here at Camp Taji. The two sisters had not seen each other for almost a year prior to PV2 Tagabuel's arrival. The two Soldiers have enjoyed their reunion immensely. These Soldiers are adding to the legacy of great women past, present and future.

**HHC Soldier PV2 Tagabuel (right) with her sister, SPC Tagabuel. The sisters are originally from Saipan, one of the Pacific Islands.**



One of the company's newest officers to join the unit is 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant John Marion. 1LT Marion is a 2004 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He currently works in the TOC and is eagerly anticipating the chance to fly on his first mission. John wanted to give a special hello to his brothers Tim and Kevin. He also appreciates the fantastic job the HHC orderly room does with the unit's mail, as he awaits the arrival of his unicycle through the U.S. postal system. I am sure that there will be more to follow with this story.

Cordell Living was promoted to Private First Class this month. PFC Living is from Lafayette, Louisiana. He returned recently from his environmental morale leave where he caught a Mardi Gras pa-



## HHC "Stallions" (cont'd)

rade in his home state. PFC Living is a very welcome addition to the S2 section as well as the HHC Stallions. He is another young Soldier that performs well above his current grade. PFC Living attended basic training at Ft Leonardwood, Missouri in February 2005. He is also a graduate of Advanced Individual Training from Ft. Huachuca, Arizona.

As many of you already know, 1SG Bolden had to have surgery to repair a disk in his back last month. During his recovery period in Landstuhl, Germany; his mother passed away and he had to be placed on emergency leave to attend her funeral. I would like to thank all that contributed in the 1SG's time of need whether it was financially or a word of encouragement. I just ask that you keep the First Sergeant and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

Once again, I am honored to be associated with such a remarkable unit. I would also

like to once again thank the Rear Detachment and Family Readiness Group for their untiring support throughout this deployment. We could not do this it without you!

**STALLIONS AT-TACK!!**

**CPT Byron C. Needum  
Stallion 06**



**PFC Living, an HHC Soldier from the intelligence section.**



**On March 11, 2006, a team of 1-4 Aviation Soldiers unloaded a container full of new gym equipment. The equipment, which includes several Nautilus-style machines, finally arrived after several months of delays during shipment. Now, it has been set up in Average Joe's Gym for the benefit of all the battalion Soldiers. Thanks to all the people who worked so hard to get the equipment to Taji and set up in our gym!**



# Dragon Photo Corner



D Company Soldiers (from left to right) SGT Klawiter, SGT Mathes, SGT Christy, and SPC Evans install a transmission.



LTC Rapavi (backseat) reenlists an HHC Soldier, SPC Bemis (frontseat), over the Apache's intercom system.



A view of Baghdad, taken by an E Company Soldier.



SSG Riggio and SGT Bozenske ride a UH-60 to BIAP.



SSG Smith watches the Echo vs. Charlie Company softball game, while CPT Ritch stands at bat.



PFC Tallet installs a tarp over C Company "pod" housing for shade, in preparation for the hot summer months.



# Dragon Photo Corner



D Co Maintenance Soldiers constructed "The Chevron....."



....where Soldiers can go to relax and work out in the hangar,



....personal gear is kept organized and out of the way,.....



.....and work can be conducted in the computer lab.



SPC Anderson and SPC Jernigan also find time for exercise....



....using whatever is available to help them stay in shape.



# Dragon Photo Corner



PFC Tallet and CW2 Strong at the line company command post area, with PFC Burris in the background.



The finished E Company BBQ Pit.



SGT Young from D Co performs maintenance on a weapon.



1LT Aguon and SFC Lopez at the BIAP FARP.



Photo of an ancient ziggurat at Aqar Quf, near Baghdad.



ISG Lambert at his desk in the B Company office.



# Dragon Photo Corner



A group of pilots and Soldiers from B Co, 3-101st out of Balad, flew in support of our battalion for a week in March.



SGT Arevalo plays soccer with some E Company Soldiers.



CW4 Small and CPT Welch carry their flight gear to the aircraft.



SPC Bramblett, a C Co crew chief, performs preflight checks



CPL Doolan, on her way to work in the promotions section.



SGT Garcia and sixty other Soldiers await a pre-leave briefing.